

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 05220 251900Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6321

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5220

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, CI

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL

IN

SANTIAGO

REFS: STATE 210340; SANTIAGO 5123

1. IN ADDITION TO MY INITIAL AND FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATIONS WITH MINISTER OF EDUCATION ON THIS SUBJECT, LAST NIGHT I HAD OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT WITH JUNTA MEMBER MERINO. THE ADMIRAL INDICATED THAT THE GOC IS ANXIOUS TO FIND A SOLUTION. I SAID THAT THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY CROSS IS EQUALLY ANXIOUS. I NOTED THAT WITH MOST, IF NOT ALL, OTHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CHILE OPERATING NORMALLY, IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE HOLY CROSS TO ACCEPT A SITUATION IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS IN EFFECT INTERVENED THE SCHOOL AND PLACED ITS APPOINTEES (A RECTOR-DELEGATE AND A GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED BOARD) BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES WHO OWN AND HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT. MERINO SAID PLAINLY THE GOC WOULD HAVE TO LIFT THE DE FACTO INTERVENTION OF THE SCHOOL. HE INDICATED THAT JUNTA UNDERSTOOD THAT THE CONGREGATION WAS THREATENING A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN AND AN EFFORT TO SEEK SENATE ACTION TO WITHHOLD U.S. ASSISTANCE FROM CHILE IF THIS PROBLEM NOT SOLVED (CASTRO REPEATED THIS STORY TO ME THIS MORNING). IN MY CONVERSATION WITH THEM THIS MORNING, FATHERS

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PAGE 02 SANTIA 05220 251900Z

LEWERS AND WARNER DENIED EVER HAVING MADE ANY SUCH THREAT BUT

ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MONSIGNOR VALICH, AUXILIARY BISHOP OF SANTIAGO, WHO HAS BEEN HELPING THEM, HAS MADE USE OF THE PHRASE "CHILE'S IMAGE ABROAD" IN REPRESENTATIONS ON THIS PROBLEM.

2. EMBASSY REQUESTED MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER FOR FATHER LEWERS AND WARNER AT THEIR REQUEST AND FOLLOWED UP WITH BOTH DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL AND MINISTER HUERTA'S CHIEF OF CABINET. MORNING OCTOBER 25 THE FOREIGN MINISTER SENT WORD THAT HE WAS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND REGRETFULLY CONCLUDED THAT HE COULD NOT BE HELPFUL AND THAT THE HOLY CROSS REPRESENTATIVES WOULD HAVE TO SEE THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AS THE OFFICIAL ABLE TO HELP THEM.

3. THIS MORNING THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION CALLED TO INVITE ME TO A MEETING IN HIS OFFICE ON THIS SUBJECT WITH BISHOP VALICH AND THE PAPAL NUNCIO. I OBTAINED FROM FATHER LEWERS AND WARNER IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING A ROUGH OUTLINE OF THEIR PROPOSAL FOR THE ACTIONS THEY WOULD BE DISPOSED TO TAKE IN CONJUNCTION WITH A GOC DECISION TO LIFT THE INTERVENTION OF ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL.

4. AT THE MEETING THE BISHOP AND THE NUNCIO WERE VERY HELPFUL WITH OUR EFFORTS TO SOFTEN THE MINISTER'S RATHER HARDLINE POSITION. TOWARD THE END OF THE MEETING THE BISHOP PROPOSED THE CREATION OF A WORKING GROUP MADE UP OF THE MINISTER'S RECTOR-DELEGATE, ONE MEMBER OF THE GOC-APPOINTED BOARD, A PARENT WHO HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO FATHER LEWERS, AND THE BISHOP HIMSELF - TO TRY TO DEVELOP PROPOSAL ACCEPTABLE TO FATHER LEWERS AND THE MINISTER. CASTRO UNDERTOOK TO SUPPORT ANY SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT APPOINTEES ON THIS WORKING GROUP.

5. I HAVE INFORMED FATHERS LEWERS AND WARNER OF THIS OUTCOME AND THEY WILL GIVE BISHOP VALICH THEIR OUTLINE OF A PROPOSED SOLUTION AND AWAIT HIS REPORT TO THEM OF THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP.
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